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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 001047

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [CVIS](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL ON RIYADH PROVINCIAL
GOVERNOR PRINCE SALMAN

REF: RIYADH 651

Classified By: Ambassador Ford Fraker
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Riyadh Provincial Governor HRH Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz emphasized the importance of U.S.-Saudi Arabia ties during Ambassador's courtesy call on May 16. The Prince stated that Saudi Arabia has no issues with nor is it a burden to the United States and discussed the important role that former U.S. ambassadors to the Kingdom play in explaining Saudi Arabia to Americans. He added that although the U.S. and Saudi Arabia may sometimes disagree on policy issues, their strategic ties and common interests preserve the long-lasting and continued friendship. Prince Salman wished the Ambassador a pleasant stay in the Kingdom and asked that the Ambassador "be confident" that Prince Salman will assist in any "administrative affairs."

¶2. (C) Prince Salman focused on regional issues, namely the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Iraq and Iran. He emphasized that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is the core problem in the Middle East, pointing out that since 1948, various countries -- namely Syria, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Egypt -- have used the pretext of liberating the Palestinian territories as justification for military coups, military interventions, and other undesirable political conquests. He said that Saddam Hussein "raised the Palestinian flag" as a justification to invade Kuwait, adding that today, Iran is using the pretext of liberating the Palestinian territories to build nuclear weapons. The Prince stressed that Iran's stated desire to destroy Israel is false and that "dealing with Israel is the least of its priorities." He said that Hizbollah's Nasrallah also uses the pretext of liberating the Palestinian territories for his actions in Lebanon. Prince Salman concluded that once the Palestinian conflict is over-- which he believes is possible, largely through King Abdullah's efforts in 2002 and 2006-- the Middle East will be able to solve its individual problems more effectively.

¶3. (C) Prince Salman emphasized Saudi Arabia's good relations with Iran, saying that, although he does not wish to see the Iranians armed with nuclear weapons, he is unable to condemn them so long as Israel is also in possession of them. Prince Salman said that he wants the tensions with Syria and Iran to end because "the sea of terrorism is wider than before and if it reaches Syria in full force, then it will continue onto Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel, becoming an ocean of terrorism facing the international community."

¶4. (C) Prince Salman stated that he hopes for an end to the Iraqi crisis. He emphasized that the U.S. should not be involved in the Iraq conflict as much as it is, adding that he does not want the U.S. to leave Iraq humiliated. He pointed to Saddam Hussein's invasions of Iran and Kuwait as the reason for the Iraq's current problems.

¶5. (C) Prince Salman continued that terrorism and fanaticism have done more harm to Islam than anything else, claiming that 9/11 inflicted the most harm to bilateral relations and Islam. He emphasized that there are fanatics in all religions and said extremism feeds extremism. He warned that the Islamic extremism Saudi Arabia is facing today is similar to what the United States will face in the future from Jewish and Christian extremists. As such, he stated that it is important for Saudi Arabia and the U.S. to continue to fight terrorism together.

¶6. (C) Prince Salman commented on visas, stating that with increased restrictions on obtaining U.S. visas, fewer Saudis are choosing the United States for tourism, medical care, and education. Acknowledging the right for the United States to protect the integrity of its borders, he suggested that more flexibility in the process is warranted. Prince Salman concluded the meeting by saying that his "door and mind are open" for the Ambassador and repeating his offer of assistance.

FRAKER